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Abstract text

Volunteers are the most important resource for non-profit sport clubs seeking to bolster their viability (e.g. sporting programs). Although many people do voluntary work in sport clubs, stable voluntary engagement can no longer be granted. This difficulty is confirmed by existing research across various European countries. From a club management point of view, a detailed understanding of how to attract volunteers and retain them in the long term is becoming a high priority. The purpose of this study is (1) to analyse the influence of individual characteristics and corresponding organisational conditions on volunteering in sports clubs as well as (2) to examine the decision-making processes in relation to implement effective strategies for recruiting volunteers.

For the first perspective a multi-level framework for the investigation of the factors of voluntary engagement in sports clubs is developed. The individual and context factors are estimated in different multi-level models based on a sample of $n = 1,434$ sport club members from 36 sport clubs in Switzerland. Results indicate that volunteering is not just an outcome of individual characteristics such as lower workloads, higher income, children belonging to the sport club, longer club memberships, or a strong commitment to the club. It is also influenced by club-specific structural conditions; volunteering is more probable in rural sports clubs whereas growth-oriented goals in clubs have a destabilising effect.

Concerning decision-making processes an in-depth analysis of recruitment practices for volunteers was conducted in nine selected sport clubs (case study design) based on the garbage can model. Results show that the decision-making processes are generally characterised by a reactive approach in which dominant actors try to handle personnel problems of recruitment in the administration and sport domains through routine formal committee work and informal networks. In addition, it proved possible to develop a typology that deliver an overview of different decision-making practices in terms of the specific interplay of the relevant components of process control (top-down vs. bottom-up) and problem processing (situational vs. systematic).

Based on the findings some recommendations for volunteer management in sport clubs are worked out.

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